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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SENGWE (Zimbabwe)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 120: HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (continued)

(a) Implementation of the Secretary-General's strategy for the management of the Organization's human resources and other human resources management issues;

(b) Composition of the Secretariat;

(c) Respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and related organizations.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 120: HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (continued) (A/51/304, A/51/421 and A/51/475; A/C.5/49/63 and A/C.5/49/64; A/C.5/50/64; A/C.5/51/1, A/C.5/51/2, A/C.5/51/3, A/C.5/51/6 and A/C.5/51/7; A/C.5/51/L.9)

1. Mr. TANÇ (Turkey) said that the importance of human resources to the United Nations was reflected in the very significant amounts budgeted for staff costs. His delegation had always supported strict adherence to the principles of the Charter governing the recruitment and employment of staff, particularly the need to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and to ensure the equitable geographical representation of Member States in the Secretariat.

2. In view of the international nature of the Organization, his delegation felt that efforts should be made to diversify geographical representation in posts other than those subject currently to geographical distribution. That applied particularly to posts in the field service and in the General Service category and to posts funded from extrabudgetary sources.

3. The Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/51/421) showed that, despite moderate progress during the year under review in improving the representation of Member States, there were still over 20 countries that were not currently represented in the Secretariat. His delegation believed that unrepresented Member States should be given priority in the recruitment of personnel. His delegation felt that in assessing the level of representation of individual Member States it would be more accurate to relate the number of staff of a particular nationality to the mid-point of each group rather than to the desirable range, which was a very imprecise criterion.

4. His own country, in terms of its population and its contribution to the budget, was among the first 25 Member States but there were only 10 staff members of Turkish nationality with permanent contracts, a number which was nevertheless considered to be within the "desirable range". At the same time, there were many countries with much smaller populations and which contributed much less to the budget whose nationals were far more numerous on the staff of the Secretariat. His delegation believed that situation should be urgently remedied. His delegation was ready to support any initiative by the Secretariat to hold national competitive examinations and to provide qualified candidates for appointments to all levels of the Secretariat.

5. His delegation was pleased to note that progress had been achieved towards increasing the representation of women in the Secretariat and hoped that efforts would continue to that end. It also welcomed the implementation of the new Performance Appraisal System and believed that it deserved to be used more widely in the United Nations system. His delegation supported the objectives of the proposed reform of the internal system of justice and noted that an efficient internal justice system was an important counterbalance to administrative decision-making and a cornerstone of human resources management.

6. Ms. BUERGO RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba) associated her delegation with the statement on human resources management made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

7. Her delegation had always considered the staff of the Organization as its most valuable resource and had made numerous proposals designed to improve working conditions and to motivate staff. It therefore noted with regret that various measures designed to achieve the savings provided for in General Assembly resolution 50/214 were incompatible with those objectives.

8. At the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, when the Secretary-General's strategy for human resources management was approved, it had been stated that the objective was to create a working environment conducive to the well-being of the staff in order to optimize their contribution to the work of the Organization. The measures to implement the strategy were described in the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/51/1) in language that was more in keeping with a corporate setting, or perhaps the administrative practices of a particular Member State, and was entirely alien to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. In the view of her delegation, that unfortunately made the objective of the strategy difficult to attain in the present climate and was a matter of concern which should be discussed in detail during the current session.

9. Her delegation approved the initiatives of the Secretariat to improve training programmes, which should contribute to greater efficiency in personnel management and in the attainment of the priorities and objectives of the Organization. In that connection, she asked for details of the subject matter of the training programmes, the identity of the instructors, how the programmes were funded and what contribution they made to promoting the independence and international status of the staff.

10. In connection with the proposed creation of a United Nations Staff College, she asked for information that would enable her delegation to form a clearer idea of its purposes.

11. Another aspect of the Secretary-General's strategy to which her delegation attached particular importance was the reform of the internal system of justice. Her delegation awaited with interest the outcome of the discussions on that matter in the Sixth Committee.

12. One other subject that was of particular interest was that of staff-management relations, which appeared to be rather unsatisfactory. Her delegation appreciated that the measures taken to achieve the necessary staff reductions had affected the working environment and said that the situation called for the utmost transparency and sensitivity on the part of the Administration. Her delegation had taken note of paragraphs 39 and 40 of document A/C.5/51/1, which referred to the process of consultation between the staff and the Administration and asked the Secretariat to indicate why the staff were so dissatisfied with the conduct of those consultations.

13. Referring to document A/C.5/51/2, on the employment of retirees, her delegation said that the information provided had been very useful in the

negotiations which had been concluded the previous day and she thanked the representative of Ukraine for his efforts as coordinator of the negotiations.

14. In connection with respect for the privileges and immunities of officials, her delegation wished to place on record once more its total opposition to any discriminatory or restrictive measures, some of them of an administrative nature, that were imposed on Cuban members of staff. Such practices were a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of other instruments. Her delegation would endeavour to ensure that the General Assembly adopted a position on that matter.

15. Turning to document A/51/421 on the composition of the Secretariat, she noted that a number of States that were unrepresented or underrepresented had been reduced by five since the previous year but was concerned at the fact that 24.2 per cent of Member States were still either unrepresented or under-represented, a fact which cast doubt on the application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution. She requested the Secretary-General to keep that matter under careful study, particularly in the current situation where the position might be further exacerbated by reductions in staff.

16. Her delegation was surprised to note that, among the personnel-related measures proposed by the Secretary-General to achieve savings, there was no indication that account had been taken of the performance of many members of staff in deciding, for example, on voluntary separations. That was a matter of concern to her delegation, as was the fact that, at a time when there was a freeze on recruitment, staff were still being recruited, but not necessarily from unrepresented or underrepresented countries. That appeared to indicate a double standard in the application of the human resources management policies and her delegation considered that the General Assembly should correct the situation.

17. Mr. YELCHENKO (Ukraine) said that his country had initially supported the Secretary-General's strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization, believing that it would be a means of upgrading individual performance and enhancing the work of the Organization. However, it appeared from the Secretary-General's report on the subject (A/C.5/51/1) that only modest progress had been achieved in the modernization of human resources management. While appreciating the long-term nature of the implementation of the strategy, his delegation regretted that the goals of more effective planning and management of the human resources of the Organization, the establishment of a fairer and more transparent recruitment procedure, a satisfactory career system and a credible performance appraisal system seemed to be as remote as ever.

18. His delegation's major concern, however, was that the gradual implementation of the strategy did not have the necessary impact to establish a new management culture that encouraged all staff to display their creative potential to the maximum and did not, in many cases, do anything to change long-established working habits.

19. The Organization could only become a really effective body if it were continually reinforced by fresh talent recruited on a broad geographical basis

in accordance with the Charter. It was a matter of concern that the United Nations Secretariat had become reluctant to accept change.

20. Another fundamental problem of the Organization was with the permanent contracts held by many of its staff members which were becoming a serious hindrance to improving the performance of the Secretariat. His delegation was convinced that a gradual transition to fixed-term and non-career staff appointments would be conducive to mobility, planned rotation and the employment of qualified candidates with fresh ideas and new vigour. In that connection, the Secretary-General, as the chief administrative officer of the Organization, must have the authority to cease to employ in the Secretariat those international civil servants who were no longer fully efficient.

21. His delegation considered that the extensive practice of secondment from government service was a very useful one which served the interests of the Organization, of the national authorities and of staff members. It would therefore support any moves to extend that form of cooperation with the United Nations.

22. It was clear from the Secretary-General's reports on the composition of the Secretariat (A/50/540 and A/51/421) that there had been some improvement in the number of unrepresented and underrepresented countries but the situation in that area was still unsatisfactory. The competitive national examinations which were held on a priority basis in underrepresented and unrepresented countries was only part of the solution; his country, as one of the underrepresented Member States, had been endeavouring to increase its presence in the United Nations Secretariat for several years, but even those Ukrainian candidates who had passed the competitive examinations were still awaiting appointment.

23. His delegation was deeply concerned that, despite the freeze in recruitment, staff were still being recruited at various levels and the beneficiaries of that practice were in many cases the overrepresented countries. In conclusion, he referred to his country's proposal for the establishment of a special intergovernmental body with a limited membership to perform control and monitoring functions in the field of human resources management. The possibility of entrusting those functions to the Committee for Programme and Coordination could also be considered. His delegation would also appreciate the wider involvement of the Office of Internal Oversight Services in the process of the monitoring of personnel policies.

24. Mr. PADILLA (Philippines) said that the increasing demands made in recent by the Member States on the United Nations system, coupled with the financial crisis and the economy measures called for in General Assembly resolution 50/214, had created a climate of uncertainty and low staff morale. If the Organization was to be efficiently managed it had to be certain of its financial resources and his delegation appealed in that connection to all Member States, especially those with large outstanding contributions, to pay them promptly, in full and without conditions.

25. The fact that 75 per cent of the budget of the Organization was allocated for personnel expenses highlighted the importance of human resources to the Organization whose success depended on the quality of both management and staff

and on relations between the two which should be conducive to the promotion of greater teamwork so as to maximize the potential of staff to contribute to the overall efficiency of the Organization.

26. At the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, his delegation had welcomed the Secretary-General's human resources management strategy which contained essential elements to revitalize the manpower of the Organization to enable it to respond more effectively to the increasing demands of the Member States, particularly during a time of financial constraints. It was apparent from the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/51/1) that there had been progress in some areas but it was also clear that some elements of the strategy would need to be more carefully studied.

27. The new Performance Appraisal System, in particular, did not seem to have achieved the expected results and the expenses incurred in the introduction of the system would need to be reviewed. His delegation noted in that connection the intention of the Secretariat to re-examine the system and revise it as necessary in the light of experience.

28. Effective planning was important in identifying the needs of the Organization, particularly with respect to the availability of the necessary skills to enable it to respond to the mandates set by the Member States. That should be achieved through enhanced dialogue and cooperation between the Secretariat's management and the staff, on the one hand, and between the Secretariat and the Member States, on the other. His delegation regretted the strained relations between management and staff and called on all parties to resume their dialogue with a view to resolving their differences.

29. His delegation asked for information on the status of Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) and asked how it had enhanced the planning capacity of the Office of Human Resources Management.

30. Turning to the question of recruitment and promotion, he drew attention to the importance of gender balance in the staffing of the Secretariat and welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to strengthen cooperation with the Member States in the recruitment process and the efforts that were being made to streamline the procedures for filling vacancies. His delegation was concerned, however, that efforts to achieve savings, as called for in General Assembly resolution 50/214, through higher vacancy rates for the Professional category might have an impact on the recruitment and promotion prospects of staff and on the efficient delivery of mandated programmes and activities. He urged the Secretary-General to make greater efforts to achieve the modest target of 25 per cent of women in posts at the policy-making and decision-making levels of the Secretariat and pointed out that more also needed to be done to tap and develop the potential of women in the General Service through examinations for promotion to the Professional category as well as varied job experience and training. The goal mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/304) of a 50/50 gender balance by the year 2000 remained elusive. In that connection, his delegation felt that the financial crisis, which was cited as a reason, should not deter efforts to achieve that goal.

31. One area which, in the opinion of his delegation, warranted careful examination, was the practice of employing staff on loan from Member States in key areas of the Secretariat. He hoped that the information on that subject requested by the representative of Pakistan under another agenda item would be forthcoming.

32. His delegation had taken note of the proposed reform of the internal justice system and favoured measures to facilitate the early resolution of disputes before they became formal appeals.

33. With respect to the security and safety of United Nations personnel, his delegation shared the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General and by other delegations. He paid tribute to the staff members who had lost their lives, one of whom had been from his own country. In February 1996 his country had become a Party to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and hoped that other Member States would do likewise.

34. Mr. MIRMOHAMMAD (Islamic Republic of Iran) associated his delegation with the statement made by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It was not easy to conclude from the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management (A/C.5/51/1) whether the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) had developed the specific guidelines required to translate the universal rules established by the General Assembly for use by programme managers and whether any monitoring mechanism had been put in place to ensure proper implementation at the departmental level of the relevant General Assembly decisions and resolutions. In order for the delegation of authority to succeed, managers must be trained to exercise their authority with the utmost care. It would be difficult, otherwise, for the global Secretariat to maintain its universality and represent the interests of all its Members.

35. The report, moreover, did not adequately address the tasks originally assigned to OHRM, namely, the performance of functions related to the administration of the staff, provision of support services to managers, establishment of a system of career development, forecasting of the Organization's needs, and securing the required skills and expertise from as many countries as possible. Despite numerous requests from the General Assembly, the report lacked any reference to development and failed to present a comprehensive career development system for staff. Instead, it had given the impression that the new Performance Appraisal System (PAS) had superseded any career development system.

36. The policy of not offering career opportunities to staff could eventually deprive the Organization of its core institutional capacity and was not in line with the recommendations of the Group of High-Level Intergovernmental Experts. Furthermore, the reduction of established posts and the increasing recourse to ad hoc funds provided by Governments reduced the representation of developing countries on the staff of the Secretariat. He noted that the new mechanism for redeployment and dismissal of staff made no distinction between career international civil servants and those on temporary appointments, as envisaged in the established rules and regulations. Logically speaking, until such time as the General Assembly approved the report of the Secretary-General on the programme budget for 1996-1997, the Secretary-General should be requested to

return to their original posts and functions those staff members who had been affected by the reductions and to postpone any further redeployment of staff.

37. With regard to the reform of the internal system of justice, given the reservations which had been expressed on the proposed system of arbitration, it was expected that the Secretary-General would provide, on a priority basis, a new set of proposals for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

38. Turning to the question of improving the status of women in the Secretariat, he noted from the Secretary-General's report that the objective of 35.1 percent representation of women in the Secretariat had been achieved. He wondered, however, whether the latest statistics had taken into account the impact of the recent downsizing.

39. Commenting on the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/51/421), he noted that the desirable range for Iran in 1996 had suddenly been reduced from 16-23 to 9-19 posts. Having failed to obtain an explanation from the Secretariat, he wished formally to request clarification of the matter. He also wished to remind the Committee that, despite the steady increase in his Government's contribution to the regular budget, not a single Iranian had been recruited to the Secretariat in nearly two decades. According to table 4 of document A/51/421, as at 30 June 1996, 17 Iranians, including seven women, held positions in posts subject to geographical distribution. Since that date, however, two senior Iranian staff had been separated and two others had been subject to the application of administrative instruction ST/AI/415 and were still awaiting placement. He therefore requested the Secretariat to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Iranian representation did not fall below the mid-point of the desirable range. Any reduction or increase in the staff of the Secretariat should take account of the principle of equitable geographical representation. Special measures should therefore be taken in order not to affect adversely the representation of those countries which were underrepresented or within range. If posts needed to be cut, the Secretariat should start with the nationals of overrepresented countries.

40. Mr. JONAH (Sierra Leone), addressing the issue of the current situation of the international civil service, said that he had definitively renounced his candidacy for the office of Secretary-General of the United Nations not only because of his deep respect for the current Secretary-General, whose unquestionable accomplishments made him deserving of a second term, but also because he wished to speak out against the serious threats to the integrity of the United Nations Secretariat. Nowhere in Article 101 of the Charter, which listed the considerations that should govern the employment of staff of the Secretariat, was there any mention of knowledge of languages. An interesting situation would develop, for example, if knowledge of Russian or Chinese were to be expected from future candidates for the post of Secretary-General.

41. There were indeed numerous obstacles to the recruitment of highly qualified civil servants, not the least of which was the practice of certain Governments which quietly supplement the pay of their nationals while publicly maintaining that the Secretariat staff was overpaid and should therefore be downsized.

Another problem was that posed by staff on loan from Governments, a practice which he had opposed when, as a member of the Secretariat, he had had responsibility for personnel matters. It was not difficult to see how such staff could be used for purposes other than the promotion of the aims of the Organization. The United Nations had been severely criticized for its "failure" in Somalia, for example, but it was instructive that the decisions taken during that period had been taken not by international civil servants but by staff on loan to the Organization, without the knowledge of the Secretary-General. While no one could deny that pressures were brought to bear on the Secretariat to recruit particular nationals, the question was how capable the Organization was of resisting those external pressures in the current situation of financial crisis.

42. Published accounts had convincingly demonstrated that the demise of the League of Nations was attributable not to external factors but to betrayal from within. He feared that current developments might represent another attempt to impose on the Organization a Secretary-General who would sign its death warrant. To his credit, Dag Hammarskjöld had resisted pressures to resign precisely because he knew that his resignation would mean the imposition of an executive troika and the destruction of the international civil service.

43. It was important for all to be vigilant in defence of the international Secretariat. Although his own country was small, poor and torn by civil strife, it would never lose its dignity. As its Permanent Representative to the United Nations, he was committed to the resurrection of the international civil service. He had been saddened to see upon his return to the Organization that Governments which had in the past supported the Secretariat and its international character were now digging its grave. He called upon the international community not to commit collective suicide by destroying the international civil service.

44. Mrs. PHAM THI NGA (Viet Nam) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the subject of human resources management. Staff had a crucial role to play in the implementation of mandates and programmes. The Organization should therefore develop a more effective recruitment system. Vacancy announcements should be disseminated through the optical disk system, in addition to the normal channels, and the requirements concerning the qualifications of staff and equitable geographical distribution should be respected.

45. Her delegation was deeply concerned over the current imbalance in the representation of Member States. National competitive examinations could contribute considerably to the recruitment of qualified individuals on the basis of equal geographic representation and should therefore be continued, with special attention being given to countries, such as Viet Nam, which were under-represented. In that connection, she would welcome clarification as to why only one of the three successful Vietnamese candidates in the national examinations held in 1993 had been recruited to date while seven other women candidates had been recruited at the P-2 levels, outside the context of national competitive examinations.

46. While some modest progress had been made in improving the situation of women in the Secretariat, women held only 17 per cent of posts at the policy-making level and no Under-Secretary-General was a woman. The Secretary-General should make further efforts to remedy that situation.

47. On the issue of the employment of retirees, the general policy outlined by the Secretary-General in his report (A/C.5/51/2) contained positive elements. It should, however, only be applied as a cost-saving measure under the impact of the current budget crisis and then only in specific areas at peak periods. It was not reasonable to exempt retirees used in conference servicing from the earnings ceiling.

48. On the issue of the reform of the internal system of justice, it was important to develop mechanisms for the early reconciliation and settlement of disputes in order to minimize costly formal proceedings. The Secretary-General should therefore consult further with the Sixth Committee on the matter. Given the Organization's critical financial situation, proposals for the establishment of new posts should also be based on an assessment of their cost-effectiveness.

49. Mr. MAPURANGA (Zimbabwe) said that his delegation was deeply concerned at the crisis of confidence which had dogged the international civil service for some time. The current climate of insecurity could only undermine the performance, commitment and loyalty of staff to the Organization. While change was inevitable, the current restructuring of the Secretariat did not appear to be the result of carefully planned transformations which took career development into account. The reform exercise should be driven by the need to increase efficiency and improve the quality of the Organization's output and not be a response to the financial constraints imposed by some Member States. Indeed, many of the measures being implemented failed to take into account the long-term interests of the United Nations or of its much maligned staff. Rather than ensuring that, over time, the most competent staff were retained, management seemed content to tick off the first available names simply to ensure that the goal of downsizing and the concomitant financial savings were attained. Saving money yielded only short-term benefits. In the long run, the United Nations must earn the trust of its employees. An insecure staff would invariably be preoccupied with acquiring survival skills rather than engaging in productive activities of benefit to the Organization.

50. A modest investment in career transition training, for example, might be all that was needed to facilitate the redeployment of staff elsewhere in the United Nations system. In other cases, it should be recognized that the individuals concerned would have given their best years of service to the Organization and should therefore not be robbed of their terminal benefits at the eleventh hour. His delegation was convinced that downsizing was possible without even contemplating involuntary separations, which had caused incalculable distress without necessarily improving the overall performance of the Organization.

51. His delegation did not agree with the view that the circumstances caused by the current financial crisis might somehow fuel positive change in the Organization. On the contrary, in the current confusion, the Organization might renege on its commitments to pursue equitable geographical representation and

gender balance in its recruitment practices. Furthermore, human resources management mechanisms put in place by the Secretary-General might before long become dirty words, since they were so prone to abuse. The well-intentioned Performance Appraisal System, for example, might actually be used as a pretext for a witch-hunt. His delegation was not convinced that those who were entrusted with improving the management culture of the Organization were fully equipped for that onerous responsibility.

52. Finally, his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's ideas on staff development and career support. Although those proposals had come too late for too many, they would nevertheless sow the seeds for the establishment of a long-term and productive relationship between the Organization and a motivated and committed staff.

Draft decision A/C.5/51/L.9

53. Mr. GOUMENNY (Ukraine), Rapporteur, introduced draft decision A/C.5/51/L.9 whereby the General Assembly would decide to set a ceiling across the board of US$22,000 per calendar year for the employment of retired staff in receipt of a pension benefit, with the exception of language services staff for whom the ceiling would US$40,000 per calendar year, and to limit such employment in all cases to no more than six months per year. He trusted that the draft decision would be adopted without a vote.

54. Draft decision A/C.5/51/L.9 was adopted.

55. Mr. HALLIDAY (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management) said that the Office of Human Resources Management had listened very carefully to the views of delegations on agenda item 120 and was grateful for the encouragement, interest and guidance it had received, as well as the criticisms which had been made. He wished to address the major issues raised during the general debate and to respond to specific questions. He was grateful that a number of delegations had recognized the modest progress which had been made in modernizing the Organization's human resources management systems, policies and approaches. In response to a question raised by a number of delegations, he explained that progress in strategy implementation had indeed been slowed in significant areas as a result of the financial crisis and budgetary constraints of the past 12 months. Some noteworthy examples included lack of funds to pursue targeted candidate searches, campus recruitment and expansion of the internship programme; delays in advancing career development programmes; and reductions in training and staff development programmes owing to cost reduction requirements. In other cases, delays had been caused by the cash flow crisis of autumn 1995 and the need to redirect considerable resources to carrying out measures linked to the implementation of the 1996-1997 programme budget, thus neglecting areas such as development initiatives, strengthening recruitment methods and implementing the early separation and staff redeployment exercise.

56. He wished to assure all delegations that the Secretary-General had scrupulously implemented the human resources management strategy despite all the delays. The use of the word "corporate" in describing the new approach to the work of the Office of Human Resources Management was intended to reflect the concept of one Organization, despite its many parts located throughout the

world. Perhaps the selection of the word was unfortunate because of its perceived link to the private sector. However, as many Member States had noted, the concept was a good one since for too many years the Secretariat had focused on its Headquarters, losing sight of the different needs and perspective of the Organization's many different duty stations, particularly the regional commissions.

57. The United Nations was not a commercial entity, yet it still had to make the best use of its limited capacities. His Office was therefore seeking to optimize the contributions of staff with a view to enhancing programme performance and thereby ensuring that Member States got the best value by having a Secretariat that was able to fulfil its mandates as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. His Office's role was to provide underlying human resources management support. In that connection, an important strategy element was the introduction of a workplan-based Performance Appraisal System (PAS). Pas had been introduced worldwide, at all duty stations, with performance appraisal cycles beginning either 1 January or 1 April 1996.

58. Some delegations had raised concerns regarding the PAS implementation process and its suitability for international civil servants. To allay those concerns, he reminded the Committee that PAS had been specifically designed for the United Nations. The new system offered the opportunity to staff and their supervisors to set agreed-upon goals, examine current work assignments, understand areas requiring further attention, and identify areas for staff growth and development. PAS was designed to hold managers and supervisors responsible for their roles in implementing the performance management process with their staff and, in so doing, for demonstrating gender and cross-cultural sensitivity. The system had been developed in consultation with staff and managers throughout the global Secretariat, and fine-tuned in the Staff-Management Coordination Committee (SMCC). Over 11,000 staff members had already received PAS training at a cost of approximately $1.3 million.

59. Making changes to management culture was a time-consuming business. It required a critical mass of managers committed to change combined with active support from the top. To date, the people management training programme had been offered to over 90 per cent of all managers at the director level and above, and plans were afoot to extend it to managers at the P-4 and P-5 levels. By the end of 1997, it was anticipated that over 1,000 managers would have received the relevant training. On a more general note, all training programmes were financed out of the regular budget and staff members were encouraged to participate on the basis of their work and their specific needs. The language training programme was open to all.

60. Responding to an inquiry about staff participation in the sabbatical study leave programme, he said that a modest 28 staff members had participated in the programme since its inception in the 1989/90 academic year. Those staff members were equally divided between nationals of developed and developing countries. As a result of changes introduced to the programme in 1995-1996, it had been possible to raise participation from one staff member in the 1993/94 term to seven in 1996.

61. The Secretary-General's 1994 strategy had mapped out an important role for the concept of one United Nations Staff College. Considerable progress had been made over the past 18 months to implement that element of the strategy. During 1995, inter-agency consultations and a feasibility study had demonstrated substantial interest in pursuing a staff college project that would encourage system-wide organizational reform and bring added value to individual training programmes, thereby creating a shared United Nations system vision, approach and management philosophy. The Staff College was intended to develop into a self-financing endeavour over time. It was currently funded in its entirety from extra-budgetary resources in the form of cash and in-kind support from Member States, United Nations system programmes seeking enhanced coordination, and the private sector.

62. The Staff College had been conceived as a system-wide network of learning programmes and opportunities in both developed and developing countries. It would offer a combination of on-site instruction opportunities for United Nations staff as well as staff of governments and non-governmental organizations. He was pleased to report that UNITAR was playing an active role in the activities of the Staff College.

63. A number of delegations had raised concerns regarding delays in the introduction of a comprehensive career development plan. His Office was bringing together the components of a career development support structure for the global Secretariat, including the introduction of managed reassignment programmes for finance, human resources management and executive officers, language staff and entry-level professionals. In the current environment of rapid change and diminishing resources, it was difficult to make straight-line projections for lifetime careers. Career development within the United Nations Secretariat demanded a flexible, dynamic approach involving shared responsibility - on the one hand, by the Organization, which should provide managerial assistance and an opportunity framework; and, on the other, by the individual staff member, who should assume greater responsibility for his professional growth and adaptability. Given the Organization's very limited resources, he was not confident that individual career plans could be delivered for each and every staff member, as had been suggested by some delegations. However, his Office would continue to provide assistance designed to meet the specific needs of various groups of staff. By way of illustration he cited entry-level Professional staff, whose early assimilation into the United Nations would be facilitated by a comprehensive programme starting in 1997 that would offer orientation, placement, training opportunities and managed reassignments.

64. The new human resources planning capacity approved by the General Assembly in December 1994 had begun its activities in October 1995. Its goal was to develop a long-term human resources planning capacity that would forecast short- and long-term staffing needs and enhance planning at the organizational as well as the departmental level. As a first step, the planning system would integrate organizational and structural elements, job profile information, individual personnel data, and financial and programme elements into one comprehensive database, to be supported by the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS). To date, the service's activities had focused on the development of a human resources management planning methodology, procedures, reporting routines and the creation or improvement of data.

65. The availability of comprehensive and reliable human resources data was essential for effective human resources management and a detailed status report on all aspects of IMIS implementation would be submitted to the Fifth Committee in the coming weeks. Many of the human resources applications of IMIS had already been implemented at Headquarters. The development of the IMIS system in offices away from Headquarters had begun during 1996, but global human resources reporting capability would be available only after full implementation at all offices away from Headquarters and the full development and integration of the worldwide database, expected by the end of 1997. Thus, over the coming months the Secretariat would increasingly have at its disposal rapidly retrievable, detailed data on its staff. Additional IMIS human resources functionalities would also be available following the establishment of the worldwide database, as would such valuable features as post classification, skills inventories, rosters (particularly of qualified women candidates) and performance appraisal records; the latter were particularly valuable tools for human resources management and planning.

66. A number of delegations had noted the modest improvements achieved in reducing the number of unrepresented, underrepresented and overrepresented Member States, while virtually all delegations had reiterated the importance of ensuring the widest possible equitable geographical distribution. He wished to assure the Committee of the Secretariat's sustained commitment in that regard. Some delegations had queried the manner in which underrepresented Member States were designated. In that regard, he noted that the existing policies were set by the General Assembly. Under those definitions, a Member State was considered to be adequately represented if the number of its nationals employed in the Secretariat on posts subject to geographical distribution fell within the desirable range as defined by the General Assembly itself. Responding to a specific question asked by the delegation of Paraguay, he noted that the desirable range for Paraguay was between 2 and 14. With just two nationals working for the Organization, Paraguay would not therefore fall within the definition of an underrepresented Member State. Nevertheless, the Secretary-General intended to continue his efforts to bring the representation of Paraguay closer to the mid-point of its desirable range. To that end, a national competitive examination had been held in Paraguay in January 1996.

67. An explanation had been requested as to why certain Member States had surpassed their geographical distribution range by over two or three times. Although his Office was continuing to make every effort to achieve a more equitable geographical recruitment intake, there were several factors which made it difficult to change such historical patterns. They included a lack of competitiveness of United Nations conditions of service vis-à-vis those prevailing in certain Member States, which made it difficult to attract and retain nationals of those States in United Nations service; availability of qualified candidates of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States when a vacancy occurred; and the tendency for representation at the principal United Nations duty stations - particularly regional commissions - to reflect regional representation, thereby affecting overall representation levels. During the current period of financial constraint and the resultant recruitment freeze, there were fewer vacancies to be filled and fewer possibilities to undertake proactive adjustment measures. However, every effort was being made to utilize recruitment through the national competitive examination process. Unrepresented

and underrepresented Member States as well as those below the mid-point of their ranges had been invited to participate in organizing such examinations. OHRM was well aware of the need for targeted recruitment at all levels to redress imbalances.

68. Responding to a request for further information on the seven - in fact five - candidates who had been recruited outside the competitive examination process, as indicated in document A/51/421 on the composition of the Secretariat, he said that Member States would appreciate that such exceptions, which involved the discretionary authority of the Secretary-General, were very rare. Five individuals fell into that category, not seven as stated in the report. One of those erroneously included was a successful national competitive examination candidate who was already serving with the United Nations on a temporary assignment. Another was a staff member serving at an overseas duty station whose temporary appointment had, by oversight, been extended locally without proper authorization. Four exceptions had been made for posts with special language requirements that necessitated qualifications in a specialized field, and one further exception related to a staff member in the office of the Secretary-General.

69. The Office of Human Resources Management was continually endeavouring to ensure prompt placement of recruited staff, and he regretted the fact that the recruitment process often appeared slow and cumbersome. He reminded the Committee that available posts were a necessary prerequisite for rapid placement. Finally on the subject of national competitive examinations, he wished to convey to the Italian delegation the Secretariat's readiness to cooperate fully in conducting a national competitive examination in Italy in 1998. Unfortunately, since OHRM had received no prior indication, Italy had not been included in the 1997 examination programme. Regrettably, two Italian candidates from the 1993 roster had declined offers of employment. With regard to a similar query about the representation level of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he noted that the Secretariat's proposal to hold a competitive examination in that country had been rejected by the Iranian Government.

70. Some delegations had raised concerns about the impact of the redeployment programme on the equitable geographical representation and the representation of women. Such concerns were academic because the Secretary-General had not abolished any regular budget posts, nor had any staff member been involuntarily separated. All separations to date had been voluntary or made through the early retirement programme.

71. Some delegations had requested information about the impact of the budget reductions on the representation of women and about measures to safeguard the gains made in increasing overall female representation levels. The data showed that only one of the 11 Professional staff members who remained to be placed through the redeployment programme was female. One again, he recalled that there had been no involuntarily separations. As a result of the concerted efforts of OHRM and programme managers, women had not been disproportionately affected by the early separation programme. Of the 89 Professional and higher category staff separated under the voluntary programmes, 60 were men.

72. OHRM was assisting programme managers in every way possible to identify qualified women for posts, especially at the policy-making level, and was working to ensure that both men and women had an opportunity to participate in the work of the Organization. The full range of work-life issues was under focus, including harassment in the workplace.

73. The early separation programme had made a contribution to human resources management beyond budgetary savings by retaining those staff members with the skills to meet the challenges facing the Organization, while allowing those who wished to leave to do so. The Secretary-General had noted the concerns expressed with respect to fixed-term and permanent appointments.

74. With regard to staff representation, the number of staff who were dues-paying members of staff associations ranged from approximately 3,000 out of 6,000 staff in New York, to 324 out of 985 staff in Nairobi. The $2.5 million in indirect costs for staff representational activities represented notional costs, reflecting costs that would have been incurred had the SMCC recommended formula been applied. Prior to the development of that formula there had been no agreement on how to quantify the time considered reasonable for staff representational activities. Actual costs could not be given since, in accordance with the wishes of the General Assembly, the formula had not yet been applied.

75. The notional indirect costs in question had been determined by applying the formula to the mid-range of the salary scale, adjusted for each duty station. The increase over indirect costs reported for 1994 reflected the fact that 1994 costings had reflected only actual costs based on actual grade levels and time release of Staff Union presidents, as well as first and second vice-presidents in New York.

76. The Secretary-General and his senior management were committed to constructive staff-management consultations on conditions of service and staff welfare. But consultations required dialogue: the comments by staff representatives and the statement by the President of the New York Staff Committee represented only one side of the story.

77. Staff Union representatives were having difficulty in adjusting to the changing circumstances faced by the Organization. Morale was extremely low, placing much pressure on elected Staff Union leaders. While the Administration understood the anxiety of the staff at large, it could not overlook reality. The real crisis lay in finding the means, in an increasingly difficult budgetary climate, to respond to the needs of Member States. There must be an honest effort to find workable solutions, protecting the interests of both the Organization and the international civil service.

78. In conclusion he welcomed the guidance provided by Member States as to where the Secretariat should focus its efforts in the coming years.

79. Mr. STÖCKL (Germany) asked if the statement by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management could be made available in writing. He noted that the Committee was still awaiting issuance of the report of the Joint

Inspection Unit (JIU) on recruitment and promotion, and asked whether the Chairman intended to keep the item open.

80. Mr. NOUR (Egypt) said that discussion could not be closed before the Committee had considered the statement by the Assistant Secretary-General. It was clear that there was indeed a crisis of confidence between the Office of Human Resources Management, the staff and Member States. A frank discussion was required, since delegations would not be able to take action on any draft resolution without a clearer picture. In particular he questioned the suggestion by the Assistant Secretary-General that staff claims were unfounded. Delegations must have an opportunity to make further observations if the root causes of the lack of confidence were to be addressed.

81. Mrs. INCERA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the information that she had requested on redeployment had not been provided. Speaking on behalf of her own delegation, she supported the comments made by the representative of Egypt.

82. Mr. GODA (Japan) said that the Committee would need to have further formal meetings on the item since several reports, including the JIU report on recruitment, had not been issued. With regard to the indication by the Assistant Secretary-General that the reference in the report on the composition of the Secretariat to the number of women candidates recruited outside the context of national competitive examinations was erroneous (A/51/421, para. 38), he requested the issuance of a corrigendum. Further, he asked for the background to the recruitment of one female candidate at the P-2 level as an exception to the recruitment freeze referred to in annex VII to the second report of the Advisory Committee (A/51/7/Add.1).

83. He welcomed the information provided about the Staff College. It was his understanding that there were no financial implications for the regular budget. Should there be any proposals with financial implications, or which involved any change in the mandate of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research or any other body, the Secretariat should submit proposals for consideration by the General Assembly or other relevant body.

84. Ms. BUERGO RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba) agreed that the text of the Assistant Secretary-General's statement should be made available in writing. Relations between the staff and the Administration were of great importance, and many concerns had been expressed by Member States. Additional clarifications were needed at a formal meeting before the Committee could consider any draft resolution in informals. Her delegation looked forward to responses by the Controller to the questions raised in connection with General Assembly resolution 50/214.

85. Mr. RAESSHAGHAGHI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation was still awaiting an answer as to why its desirable range had decreased and an explanation of the separation of two Iranian nationals in connection with recent reductions. He supported the statement by the representative of Egypt.

86. Mr. MOKTEFI (Algeria) said that his delegation looked forward to the early consideration by the Fifth Committee of the JIU report on recruitment and promotion.

87. The CHAIRMAN noted that there was a need to study further the statement by the Assistant Secretary-General, and for consideration of the JIU report. The Committee would proceed accordingly.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.